



Budget Notebooks

Just because you're on a tight budget doesn't mean you have to buy a desktop PC. We test nine notebooks that offer a wealth of features for under £600

Desktop PCs are cheaper than ever before, but until recently buying a portable computer meant paying a huge premium. Notebooks are still more expensive than desktop PCs, but the gap is closing rapidly. It is now possible to pick up a brand-name notebook with 512MB of memory, a DVD writer and an 80GB hard disk for £499 plus VAT.

For this test we set nine manufacturers a tough challenge: to provide the best notebook they could build without spending more than £499 excluding VAT, or £586 inclusive. We were astonished by the computers we received.

Most of the notebooks have a DVD writer, and many can write to two-layer discs. Four have 512MB of memory rather than the 256MB usually included with cheaper notebooks, and two have huge 80GB hard disks. All can connect to wireless networks, and one even has a widescreen display. Until now this type of screen was unheard of at this price.

IN THIS REVIEW

Evesham Quest A220
Fujitsu-Siemens Amilo Pro V2010
Hi-Grade Notino C7000i
HP Compaq nx6110
Lenovo ThinkPad R50e
Mesh Dynamo CSX
MV Mobeus 15"
Toshiba Satellite L10 – 144
Watford Aries Provision 2540

Every one of them feels tough enough to carry around, showing that the manufacturers haven't sacrificed build quality for a low price. Whether you need a notebook for working on the move, surfing the internet at home or watching DVDs, we'll help you pick up a portable bargain.



CHOOSING A... BUDGET NOTEBOOK

You may be paying less for your notebook, but that doesn't mean you should lower your standards. Here's what you can expect for your money

Not so long ago buying a notebook for under £600 meant making some major compromises, but this is no longer the case. Today even the cheapest notebooks can be well built, with accurate touch pads and good keyboards. You don't even have to go without high-specification optical drives or put up with stingy amounts of memory, but it is still important to consider how you will use your notebook.

All the notebooks in this month's Labs test are powerful enough for office tasks and browsing the internet, but only a few can deal with more complicated tasks such as image editing. While all are light enough to carry around, only three have enough battery life to work on the move.

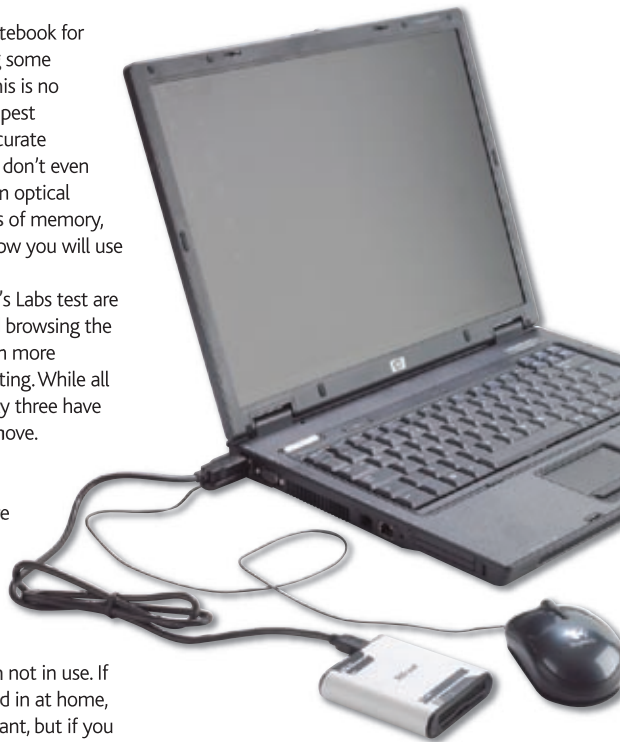
GOING THE DISTANCE

Notebooks are no longer the preserve of business users who need to take their work with them. More and more people are buying notebooks for the home instead of a desktop PC, as they are smaller, quieter and can be tidied away when not in use. If your notebook will always be plugged in at home, battery life is not particularly important, but if you want to work on the move or watch DVDs when travelling, it's vital that your notebook battery lasts a reasonable amount of time.

Three hours of battery life should enable you to use a notebook away from your home or office without worrying about being caught short. Lenovo's ThinkPad comes close, but only the Toshiba, HP and Hi-Grade notebooks lasted long enough in our battery test to be useful on the road. The Fujitsu-Siemens Amilo Pro lasted less than 100 minutes, which is extremely poor.

POINTS OF VIEW

While you can upgrade most notebooks by adding more memory, a larger hard disk and even a better



▲ Make sure your notebook has enough USB ports for all your peripherals – some provide only two

optical drive, the display, keyboard and touch pad are there to stay. This means it's important to make sure that these core components are up to scratch when you buy. All the notebooks in the group apart from Evesham's Quest have 15" displays with resolutions of 1,024x768 pixels, but they vary in quality. The screen on Fujitsu-Siemens' Amilo Pro has vibrant colours and good contrast, but is barely bright enough, while the Watford Aries Provision's screen is bright but with washed-out colours. Evesham's 1,280x800-pixel widescreen display is superb, with deeply saturated colours and very strong contrast.

The quality of the keyboards and touch pads also varies significantly. The Lenovo has a very high-quality keyboard with long key travel and perfectly judged feedback, while the Mesh and MV's keys hardly travel at all and can be tiring to use.

If you don't want to carry an external mouse around with you, you should also look carefully at the quality of the notebook's built-in input device. The Lenovo has a touch stick instead of a touch pad, which works well once you get used to it, and the HP Compaq's touch pad is extremely accurate with comfortable buttons. The touch pad used by the Mesh notebook is inaccurate and can be frustrating to use, while the Hi-Grade's buttons are too stiff for comfort.

SPEED LIMITS

Most of the notebooks in this group use Intel's Celeron M mobile processors. Seven of the notebooks use Celeron M chips running at 1.4 or 1.5GHz, while two use AMD's Mobile Sempron processors. All the notebooks have enough power for surfing the internet, word processing and other office tasks, but try anything more complicated and the five notebooks with 256MB of memory begin to struggle. This is especially evident in our image manipulation benchmark.

If you want to edit photographs or do other memory-intensive tasks, 512MB of RAM is vital. Upgrading when you buy shouldn't cost more than £30.

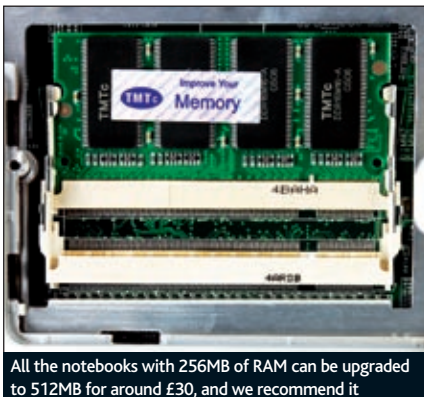
The memory module needed to upgrade costs around £25 from www.crucial.com/uk if you don't mind fitting it yourself.

READING, WRITING AND REASSURANCE

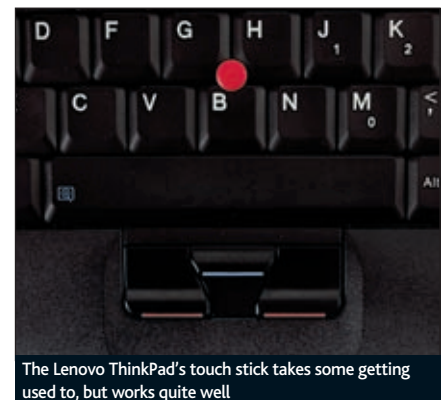
Notebooks at this price generally include a 40GB hard disk. This provides enough storage for documents and some music and video. If you like to hoard hundreds of media files, it's worth looking for a larger disk. Watford and MV have included a generous 80GB of storage space in their notebooks.

The more files you have, though, the more you stand to lose should your computer break down. An optical drive can help by allowing you to write backups to CDs and DVDs. Every notebook in this group can write to CD-R discs, which hold up to 650MB of data, but six can write more than 4GB to a single DVD disc. Four of these can also write to two-layer discs, which hold over 8GB of data.

It's also important to find out what kind of warranty cover you can expect should the worst happen. All the manufacturers provide parts and labour cover for at least a year, but the terms vary; a collect-and-return warranty is easier than a return-to-base (RTB) one.



All the notebooks with 256MB of RAM can be upgraded to 512MB for around £30, and we recommend it



The Lenovo ThinkPad's touch stick takes some getting used to, but works quite well



EVESHAM Quest A220



RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £586 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.lowestonweb.com

DETAILS www.evesham.com

Evesham's A220 is the first budget multimedia notebook we have seen. It has a widescreen display and a remote control for CDs and DVDs.

FEATURES

The Evesham's metallic grey finish may not be to everyone's taste, but it feels very solid. The 15.4" widescreen display is easily the best in the group, and it's certainly the best we have seen on such an inexpensive notebook. Colours are incredibly vibrant and are evenly bright across the panel, and blacks are very dark.

The display is perfect for watching DVDs, and the A220 can play DVD videos without starting Windows. The CardBus slot holds a remote control, which works with an infrared receiver on the front to control playback.

The keyboard flexes a little, but the keys have plenty of travel and typing is comfortable. The touch pad is not as accurate as some others, but the buttons have a solid click.

PERFORMANCE

The A220's AMD Mobile Sempron processor runs at 1.8GHz. This powerful chip helped it to the best score in our *Shopper* video-encoding test, but like the other notebooks with only 256MB of memory it performed poorly in our image-manipulation test. It scored 54 overall, but this score would be greatly improved if you added an extra 256MB of memory. Its battery life of 149 minutes is lower than many in this group, though, and like most of the notebooks here it is unsuitable for playing modern 3D games.

VERDICT

Evesham's Quest A220 is held back by its limited memory, but it has features that are usually found only on more expensive notebooks and its screen is a revelation. It's ideal for home users who don't need to work on the move, but we'd recommend an upgrade to 512MB of memory.

✓ Amazing screen; impressive multimedia features

✗ Mediocre battery life

SPECIFICATIONS 1.8GHz AMD Mobile Sempron 3000+, 256MB RAM, 40GB hard disk, SIS M760 integrated graphics, DVD+/-RW DL, 15.4" widescreen LCD



FUJITSU-SIEMENS Amilo Pro V2010

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £529 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.shopfsc.co.uk

DETAILS www.fujitsu-siemens.co.uk

The Amilo Pro V2010 is a competent notebook with a good specification and high-contrast screen but is let down by its terrible battery life.

FEATURES

The Amilo Pro is a chunky notebook which is very thick when closed, but it feels durable. The base houses four USB2 ports as well as D-sub and S-video outputs. Its DVD writer can write to high-capacity two-layer discs and it can connect to an 802.11g wireless network at 54Mbit/s.

The keyboard flexes quite a lot, but the keys have a good amount of travel. The backslash key is on the left of the keyboard where it should be, but the left shift key is tiny. The touch pad has a smooth surface and the large buttons are easy to press, but it is fairly inaccurate.

Unfortunately, the screen is dim. You can view it comfortably only at its brightest setting. Its contrast is impressive, though, and colours are vibrant. The speakers are surprisingly good, with well-defined treble and some bass.

PERFORMANCE

The V2010's performance is more than adequate for surfing the net and normal office tasks. With 512MB of memory it coped well in our image-manipulation test, and it scored 64 overall. It is unsuitable for playing recent games, though, and could not run our Doom 3 or 3DMark03 tests.

Intel's mobile processors use little power, but the V2010 performed abysmally in our battery life test, suggesting other components are hungry for juice. It ran for just 97 minutes.

VERDICT

The Amilo Pro V2010 has a generous amount of memory and performed well in our Windows tests, but its screen is dim and its battery life is dismal. Most users should choose a notebook that can run for longer away from the mains.

✓ Good Windows performance

✗ Very poor battery life

SPECIFICATIONS 1.5GHz Intel Celeron M 370, 512MB RAM, 40GB hard disk, VIA Unichrome Pro integrated graphics, DVD+/-RW DL, 15" LCD



HI-GRADE Notino C7000i

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £586 inc VAT

SUPPLIER Hi-Grade 020 8532 6111

DETAILS www.higrade.com

Hi-Grade's Notino C7000i is a sturdy notebook with excellent battery life, but its performance is hampered by its limited memory.

FEATURES

The C7000i has a two-tone grey finish that looks businesslike and smart. Although there is some flex in the base, the screen is very solid, and the plastic around the keyboard feels tough.

The 15" screen is a little dim, but text is very sharp and the excellent contrast makes it great for viewing photos. Its vertical viewing angles are poor, however, so the panel must be positioned carefully to prevent colours fading at the top and bottom of the screen.

Although the keyboard flexes noticeably, typing is easy as the keys have plenty of travel and well-judged feedback. The touch pad is reasonably accurate, but the buttons are very stiff and tiring to use.

There are plenty of connectivity options, with a FireWire port and a memory card reader that can read MMC, SD and MS cards.

PERFORMANCE

The C7000i uses a 1.4GHz Intel Celeron M processor. Like the other notebooks with only 256MB of RAM it performed poorly in our image-manipulation test, and its overall score of 51 reflects this. On the other hand, its battery lasted almost four hours.

Unfortunately, the Intel integrated graphics chipset that Hi-Grade has used is showing its age. It was unable to run our 3D benchmarks and can't handle modern games.

VERDICT

Hi-Grade's C7000i isn't particularly powerful, but its battery life is close to the best in the group. It's a decent notebook but is overshadowed by its rivals. Those who want power should choose the Watford, and those who value battery life the most should pick Toshiba's Satellite.

✓ Excellent battery life; good connectivity

✗ Stiff touch pad buttons

SPECIFICATIONS 1.4GHz Intel Celeron M 360, 256MB RAM, 40GB hard disk, Intel 855GME integrated graphics, DVD+/-RW, 15" LCD



HP Compaq nx6110



RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £504 inc VAT

SUPPLIER HP 08452 704222

DETAILS www.hp.co.uk

The nx6110 won our budget notebooks Labs in July. It has just been updated, and the new PY496ET revision adds improved battery life to the original's exceptional build quality and impressive keyboard and touch pad.

FEATURES

What the nx6110 lacks in flashy design it makes up for in build quality. The base and screen are both very stiff, and the entire notebook is made of high-quality plastic. Although not quite up to the ThinkPad's standard, the keyboard is very comfortable to use. The touch pad is also very good, with comfortable rubber buttons.

A FireWire port is included on the left of the chassis, but there are only two USB2 ports, so you'll need a hub if you want to connect a keyboard, mouse and printer at the same time. This is one of only three notebooks in the group that can't write to any kind of DVD disc.

The screen is very clear, but it's not as good as that of the Evesham Quest A220. Colours are vibrant, but blacks have a slightly grey tinge. Its speakers are the best in the group, though, as they are loud and clear with plenty of treble.

PERFORMANCE

The nx6110 is limited by having only 256MB of memory. It performed poorly in the memory-hungry image-manipulation part of our benchmarks, and scored 51 overall. Its battery is great, though, and it lasted for almost four hours in our test. This is one of only three notebooks in the group that could run our 3DMark03 benchmark. It couldn't run our Doom 3 test, but it will allow you to play some older games.

VERDICT

Like Toshiba's Satellite, this is a sturdy notebook with a good keyboard and excellent battery life. The Satellite has a DVD writer, but the HP is £40 cheaper. It's our Best Budget Buy.



Great build quality, keyboard and touch pad; excellent battery life



Can't write to DVDs

SPECIFICATIONS 1.4GHz Intel Celeron M 360, 256MB RAM, 40GB hard disk, Intel 915GM integrated graphics, CD-RW/DVD combo drive, 15" LCD. **Part code** PY496ET



LENOVO ThinkPad R50e

RATING ★★

PRICE £576 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.misco.co.uk

DETAILS www.lenovo.com

IBM no longer makes the ThinkPad range, but the R50e feels just as solid as previous models. Sadly, its performance isn't up to scratch.

FEATURES

ThinkPad notebooks are famous for their black, angular cases, and this is no exception. Its thick lid and tough plastic feel indestructible. The chassis tapers towards the front, making it less tiring to type on for extended periods of time.

The keyboard is the best in the group. There is no flex at all, and the keys have long travel and perfect feedback. A touch stick controls the cursor instead of the more common pad.

The screen has good contrast, but colours vary in shade around the edges of the screen and the entire panel is rather dim at the brightest setting. It has only two USB2.0 ports, and this is one of only three notebooks in the group without a DVD writer. This is the only notebook here to come with Windows XP Professional, though, which makes it a good choice for business users who need to log on to a Windows domain at work.

PERFORMANCE

The ThinkPad's score of 46 overall in our *Shopper* benchmarks was the lowest in the group. Its limited memory and slow optical drive held it back in our image-manipulation and audio-encoding tests. Its battery lasted for just under three hours, which is acceptable but way behind the Toshiba, HP and Hi-Grade notebooks. Like most others here, it failed to run our 3D tests and can't cope with recent 3D games.

VERDICT

The ThinkPad is the best-built notebook in the group, and it has the best keyboard. On the other hand, it's also the slowest notebook here. If you want a well-built notebook with a good keyboard, pick HP's cheaper nx6110 instead.



Excellent keyboard and build quality



Mediocre performance; can't write to DVDs; relatively expensive

SPECIFICATIONS 1.4GHz Intel Celeron M 360, 256MB RAM, 40GB hard disk, Intel 855GME integrated graphics, CD-RW/DVD combo drive, 15" LCD



MESH Dynamo CSX

RATING ★★

PRICE £586 inc VAT

SUPPLIER Mesh 08700 464747

DETAILS www.meshcomputers.com

Mesh's Dynamo CSX uses the same chassis as MV's Mobeus 15", but it has a lower specification and a higher price. Its keyboard and touch pad are also well below the quality we expect.

FEATURES

The Dynamo is a slim notebook, and its silver and black finish makes it look more expensive than it is. Unfortunately, the plastic on the lid and keyboard surround is flimsy and feels cheap. Its wide base holds a keyboard with large and well-spaced keys, but they have very little travel and a snappy action that makes typing a chore. The touch pad's large metal buttons look good and are easy to use, but the touch pad itself is very inaccurate, so navigating Windows can be a frustrating experience.

This is one of three notebooks in this group without a DVD writer, and its 40GB hard disk looks stingy when compared to the 80GB disk included with the MV notebook.

PERFORMANCE

With a 1.4GHz Intel Celeron M processor and 512MB of RAM, the Mesh performed well in our *Shopper* benchmark tests, scoring 63 overall. It ran our 3DMark03 test, but failed to run our Doom 3 benchmark. It should run older games, but don't expect to play Battlefield 2.

Mesh's battery lasted a mediocre 148 minutes in our test. The case also contains a small backup battery that can keep the system running for a few minutes; this gives you enough time to swap the empty battery for a charged one.

VERDICT

The Dynamo CSX is reasonably fast but suffers from one of the worst keyboards in the group and a poor touch pad. It's not good value, either: MV's notebook is better specified and cheaper. If you like the design, save £60 and buy the MV.



Slim and stylish



Poor keyboard and touch pad; MV is better value

SPECIFICATIONS 1.4GHz Intel Celeron M 360, 512MB RAM, 40GB hard disk, Intel 915GM integrated graphics, CD-RW/DVD combo drive, 15" LCD



MV Mobeus 15"

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £528 inc VAT

SUPPLIER MV 08718 554668

DETAILS www.go-mv.com

MV's Mobeus 15" uses the same chassis as Mesh's Dynamo CSX, but it has a better specification and is better value.

FEATURES

The Mobeus uses the same case as Mesh's Dynamo, and it has the same disadvantages: the plastic around the keyboard feels cheap, the lid is flexible and the keyboard is extremely poor. It has four USB2 sockets, one FireWire port and a memory card reader that supports MMC, SD and MS memory cards.

The notebook is silent most of the time, but a noisy fan starts up when it is working hard. This fan does a good job of cooling components, though, as the Mobeus's base stays cooler than those of the other notebooks in the group.

The MV's display is one of the best in the group. It is bright enough on the brightest setting, and colours are far more vibrant than those on the Watford's screen. It is one of only two notebooks here to provide an 80GB hard disk, and its DVD writer can create two-layer discs.

PERFORMANCE

Like most of the notebooks in the group, the MV has an Intel Mobile Celeron processor. With 512MB of memory inside, it managed an excellent score of 69 in the *Shopper* image manipulation test and scored 68 overall.

Unlike most of the notebooks in the group, its Intel 915GM integrated graphics were able to run our 3DMark03 test, but it's not powerful enough to run modern 3D games. Its battery lasted 153 minutes in our test, so it's not really suitable for working on the move.

VERDICT

The MV looks stylish and is very cheap for a notebook with an 80GB hard disk. Unfortunately, its keyboard and touch pad are very poor. Unless you intend to plug in a keyboard and mouse, it's not a good choice.



Good value and performance



Inaccurate touch pad; poor keyboard

SPECIFICATIONS 1.4GHz Intel Celeron M 360, 512MB RAM, 80GB hard disk, Intel 915GM integrated graphics, DVD+/-RW DL, 15" LCD



TOSHIBA Satellite L10 - 144

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £542 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.gultronics.co.uk

DETAILS www.toshiba.co.uk

Toshiba's Satellite L10 - 144 is a no-frills notebook that's tough, looks smart and has excellent battery life. It is a fine choice.

FEATURES

The L10's design won't win any awards, but it looks smart enough in a no-nonsense kind of way. Both the base and lid are very stiff, and the plastic around the keyboard feels solid.

The keyboard isn't as good as that on the ThinkPad, but it is still impressive. The matte finish is pleasant to the touch, but the backslash key is on the right of the keyboard. The touch pad is small but very accurate, and the buttons are big and easy to use.

The Satellite's screen is only just bright enough at its maximum setting, but it has excellent colour saturation and horizontal viewing angles, as well as reasonable levels of contrast. A DVD writer is included.

PERFORMANCE

Like all the notebooks in the group with 256MB of RAM, the Toshiba performed badly in our image-manipulation test. This lowered its overall score in our *Shopper* benchmarks to 54.

The 1.5GHz Intel Celeron processor is fairly powerful, and this is reflected in its decent score of 65 in our video-encoding test. Adding another 256MB of RAM would increase its performance considerably. Like most notebooks in this group, it is unsuitable for playing recent 3D games.

The Satellite lasted for 233 minutes in our battery-life test. This is a remarkable feat of endurance for such an inexpensive notebook, and makes it great for working on the go.

VERDICT

The Toshiba has enough battery life for working on the move and, unlike the HP, includes an internal DVD writer. It is not as well-specified as the Hi-Grade, but it has a better touch pad and is £40 cheaper.



Superb battery life; good keyboard



Dim screen; would benefit from more memory

SPECIFICATIONS 1.5GHz Intel Celeron M 370, 256MB RAM, 40GB hard disk, Intel 855GME integrated graphics, DVD+/-RW, 15" LCD



WATFORD Aries Provision 2540

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £540 inc VAT

SUPPLIER Savastore 08716 661616

DETAILS www.savastore.com

As one of only two notebooks here with an 80GB hard disk and one of four with 512MB of RAM, Watford's Aries Provision 2540 is not short of features. However, its screen is substandard.

FEATURES

The Provision 2540 is the thickest notebook in the group, and at 3kg it's also the heaviest. Its silver lid has a brushed metal effect and is made of high-quality plastic, as is the keyboard surround. Although there is some flex in the base, the notebook feels durable.

The thick base allows the keys plenty of travel, but they have a slightly snappy action and the keyboard flexes when you type. The touch pad has a pleasant smooth surface and is matched only by the Toshiba's for accuracy, but the buttons feel flimsy.

The 80GB hard disk is very large for a budget notebook, and backing up is easy thanks to the internal double-layer DVD writer. Unfortunately, the screen is very poor. It's bright and not grainy, but colours are washed out and lack vibrancy. Its viewing angles are too narrow to enable several people to watch a DVD comfortably.

PERFORMANCE

The Provision's 1.6GHz Mobile AMD Sempron processor has the second-highest clock speed in the group, after the 1.8GHz chip in the Evesham. Those extra clock cycles helped it to a score of 68 in our video-encoding test, and its 512MB of RAM contributed to a decent score of 57 in the memory-intensive image-manipulation test. Its score of 69 overall was the best in the group. Its battery life of 154 minutes is reasonable, but not really long enough for working on the move.

VERDICT

The Provision is powerful and has a reasonable keyboard and touch pad. Its hard disk is large, and it has a good DVD writer. Unfortunately, its screen is too poor for us to recommend it.



Powerful; huge hard disk



Screen looks washed out

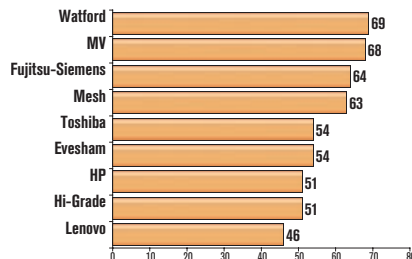
SPECIFICATIONS 1.6GHz AMD Mobile Sempron 2600+, 512MB RAM, 80GB hard disk, VIA integrated graphics, DVD+/-RW DL, 15" LCD



BENCHMARKS

2D Performance **Shopper application tests**

Overall



SETTINGS We run our application tests at 1,024x768 resolution and in 32-bit colour
WEB www.computershopper.co.uk

Video-Encoding Test

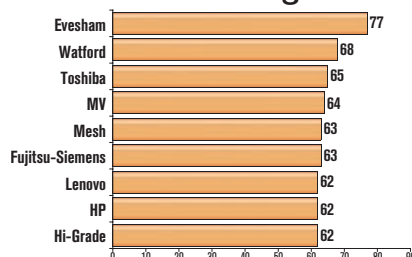
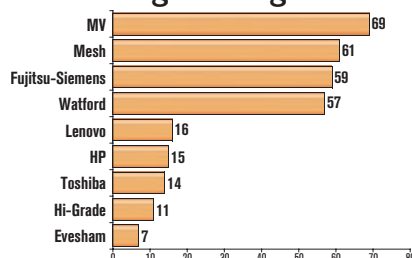


Image-Editing Test



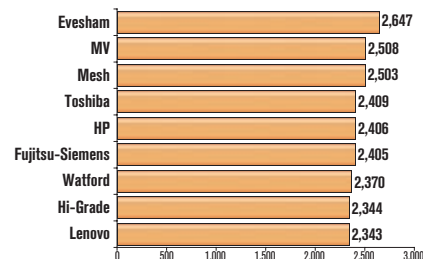
Computer Shopper's 2D benchmarks are designed to show how PCs stand up to the toughest tasks Windows can throw at them. Today's PCs have no problem running office applications such as Word and Excel, so we have chosen to focus our tests on areas where you could experience difficulties.

In version 1.0 there are three scripts. Encoding a short video to MPEG2 format is an extremely processor-intensive task, and one that anyone interested in transferring home videos to DVD will have to tackle. Our image-editing test simulates a session of photo enhancement using Paint Shop Pro, culminating with the memory-intensive composition of a panorama from a set of digital snaps. Finally, a set of MP3s is generated by ripping an audio CD.

We compiled all the tests with the help of our sister magazine for performance computing, *Custom PC*. By tackling advanced tasks the tests will give you warning of any speed issues you could encounter. Figures are relative to a reference Evesham Athlon 64 3500+ system, which scores 100 in all tests.

PCMark04

PCMark04



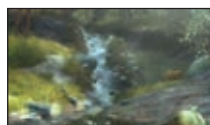
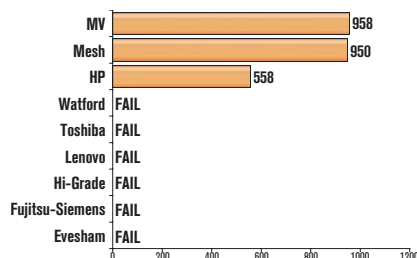
SETTINGS We run PCMark04 at 1,024x768 resolution and in 32-bit colour
WEB www.futuremark.com

As well as our own benchmarks, we test all desktop and notebook PCs using Futuremark's PCMark04. You can download a free version of PCMark04 from www.futuremark.com/download, so you can compare our results with those from your own computer.

PCMark04 performs a variety of tests to measure system performance. These include testing the hard disk, memory, processor and graphics. All the tests mimic the stresses placed on your computer by actual applications, giving a fair indicator of how powerful a PC is.

3D Performance **3DMark03**

3DMark03

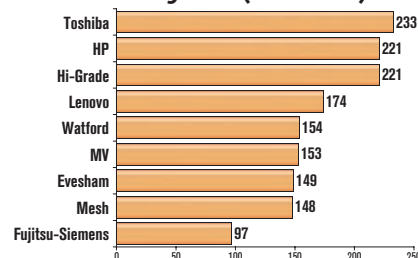


SETTINGS 1,024x768 resolution, 32-bit colour, default settings
WEB www.futuremark.com

3DMark03 comprises four game tests from four different genres. Each test involves real-time rendering of a 3D environment. 3DMark03 gives you a good idea of how well a PC will run today's games. You can download a free limited version of 3DMark03 from the Futuremark website.

Portability

MobileMark2002 battery life (minutes)



LABS VERDICT **BUDGET NOTEBOOKS**

Picking a winner from such a group of competent notebooks is difficult. All the computers we tested provide enough power for office and internet tasks, and several have a battery that's good enough for working on the move.

Unless you want to eviscerate zombies in Doom 3, you'll find a notebook here that suits you, but it still pays to choose carefully. Several notebooks are let down by one crucial weakness. Watford's notebook has a poor screen, the Mesh and MV have a poor keyboard and touch pad, Lenovo's ThinkPad is underpowered and the Fujitsu-Siemens has a terrible battery.

Three notebooks stand out. HP's Compaq nx6110 is cheap and well built. It's not that powerful, but if you want a simple notebook to work on, it's great. It's our Best Budget Buy. If you want to work on the move, though, we'd recommend Toshiba's Satellite L10 – 144. It has a DVD writer, a powerful processor and a battery that lasts almost four hours. For home use, though, Evesham's Quest A220 is ideal. Its widescreen LCD is superb, and its multimedia functions make watching DVDs easy. With a £24 memory upgrade its performance will increase dramatically. It's our Best Buy.

EVESHAM
Quest A220



HP
Compaq nx6110





MANUFACTURER	EVESHAM 	FUJITSU-SIEMENS	HI-GRADE	HP 	
Model	Quest A220	Amilo Pro V2010	Notino C7000i	Compaq nx6110	
Rating	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	
Processor	Mobile AMD Sempron 3000+	Intel Celeron M 370	Intel Celeron M 360	Intel Celeron M 360	
Speed	1.8GHz	1.5GHz	1.4GHz	1.4GHz	
Memory installed	256MB	512MB	256MB	256MB	
Memory slots (free)	2 (1)	2 (0)	2 (1)	2 (1)	
Max memory	2GB	2GB	2GB	2GB	
BIOS	AMI	Phoenix	Phoenix	HP	
Dimensions (HxWxD)	31x355x254mm	33x330x276mm	32x329x272mm	33x327x268mm	
Weight	2.85kg	2.8kg	2.75kg	2.65kg	
Sound	Realtek AC'97	Realtek AC'97	Crystal AC'97	SoundMAX Integrated Digital Audio	
Pointing device	Touch pad	Touch pad	Touch pad	Touch pad	
DISPLAY					
Screen size	15.4"	15"	15"	15"	
Graphics adaptor	SIS M760 integrated graphics	VIA UniChrome Pro integrated graphics	Intel 855GME integrated graphics	Intel 915GM integrated graphics	
Graphics outputs	D-sub, S-video	D-sub, S-video	D-sub, S-video	D-sub	
Graphics memory	64MB	64MB shared	64MB shared	64MB shared	
Native resolution	1,280x800	1,024x768	1,024x768	1,024x768	
STORAGE					
Hard disk (available)	40GB (35GB)	40GB (37.2GB)	40GB (35.8GB)	40GB (37.2GB)	
Optical drive	DVD+/-RW DL	DVD+/-RW DL	DVD+/-RW	CD-RW/DVD combo drive	
Optical drive speeds	8X DVD+R, 8X DVD-R, 8X DVD+RW, 8X DVD-RW, 4X DVD+R DL, 4X DVD-R DL, 24X CD-R, 20X CD-RW, 8X DVD-ROM, 24X CD-ROM	8X DVD+R, 8X DVD-R, 4X DVD+RW, 4X DVD-RW, 2.4X DVD+R DL, 24X CD-R, 16X CD-RW, 8X DVD-ROM, 24X CD-ROM	2.4X DVD+R, 4X DVD-R, 2.4X DVD+RW, 2X DVD-RW, 16X CD-R, 4X CD-RW, 8X DVD-ROM, 24X CD-ROM	24X CD-R, 24X CD-RW, 8X DVD-ROM, 24X CD-ROM	
Floppy disk	£35 inc VAT	£35 inc VAT	No	No	
PORTS & EXPANSION					
USB2 ports	4	4	3	2	
FireWire	No	No	1	1	
Infrared port	For remote control only	No	Yes	No	
Bluetooth	No	No	No	No	
Networking	10/100 wired, 802.11b/g	10/100 wired, 802.11b/g	10/100 wired, 802.11b/g	10/100 wired, 802.11b/g	
CardBus slots	1	1	1	1	
Modem	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Legacy ports	No	No	Parallel	No	
Other ports	No	No	Optical S/PDIF out	No	
EXTRAS					
Carrying case	£25 inc VAT	£29 inc VAT	No	£27 inc VAT	
Direct CD control	Yes	No	No	No	
Operating system	Windows XP Home	Windows XP Home	Windows XP Home	Windows XP Home	
Operating system restore option	Windows CD and restore partition	Windows CD	Restore partition	Windows CD, driver CD	
Software included	Microsoft Works 8, Roxio Easy Media Creator 7 Basic DVD Home, BullGuard Anti-virus 5	InterVideo WinDVD 5, Nero SmartSuite 6	Ability Office 4, BullGuard Anti-virus 5, Sonic RecordNow! 7	Sonic RecordNow! 7	
Other standard accessories	Remote control	Vodafone 3G data card	Memory card reader (supports MMC, SD, MS)	None	
Optional extras	Extra battery £90 inc VAT, upgrade to 512MB RAM £24 inc VAT	Upgrade to 1GB RAM £117 inc VAT	Extra battery £111 inc VAT	Extra battery £121 inc VAT	
BUYING INFORMATION					
Company founded	1983	1999	1986	1939	
Employees	421	6,500	85	140,000	
Tech support staff	84	25	10	Not disclosed	
Tech support times	Mon-Sat 9am-5.30pm	Mon-Fri 9am-5pm, Sat 10am-4pm	Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm	Mon-Fri 8am-6pm	
Parts warranty	One year RTB	One year collect and return	One year collect and return	One year collect and return	
Labour warranty	One year RTB	One year collect and return	One year collect and return	One year collect and return	
Price inc VAT and delivery	£586	£529	£586	£504	
Price ex VAT and delivery	£499	£450	£499	£429	
Details	www.evesham.com	www.fujitsu-siemens.co.uk	www.higrade.com	www.hp.co.uk	
Supplier	Lowest On Web	Shop Fujitsu-Siemens	Hi-Grade Computers	Hewlett-Packard	
Phone	08701 609500	08001 613060	020 8532 6111	08452 704222	
Web address	www.lowestonweb.com	www.shopfsc.co.uk	www.higrade.com	www.hp.co.uk	
Model part code	N/A	VFY:APED2010-732GB.VOD	N/A	PY496ET	



LENOVO	MESH	MV	TOSHIBA	WATFORD
ThinkPad R50e	Dynamo CSX	Mobeus 15"	Satellite L10 – 144	Aries Provision 2540
★★	★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
Intel Celeron M 360	Intel Celeron M 360	Intel Celeron M 360	Intel Celeron M 370	Mobile AMD Sempron 2600+
1.4GHz	1.4GHz	1.4GHz	1.5GHz	1.6GHz
256MB	512MB	512MB	256MB	512MB
2 (1)	2 (0)	2 (0)	2 (1)	2 (0)
2GB	2GB	2GB	1GB	2GB
IBM	Phoenix	Phoenix	Phoenix	AMI
37x330x267mm	33x335x279mm	33x335x279mm	36x330x270mm	38X334x271mm
2.86kg	2.65kg	2.65kg	2.75kg	3kg
SoundMAX Integrated Digital Audio	Realtek High Definition Audio	Realtek High Definition Audio	Conexant AC-Link Audio	Realtek AC'97
Touch stick	Touch pad	Touch pad	Touch pad	Touch pad
15"	15"	15"	15"	15"
Intel 855GME integrated graphics	Intel 915GM integrated graphics	Intel 915GM integrated graphics	Intel 855GME integrated graphics	VIA UniChrome Pro integrated graphics
D-sub	D-sub, S-video	D-sub, S-video	D-sub, S-video	D-sub, S-video
64MB shared	128MB shared	128MB shared	64MB shared	64MB shared
1,024x768	1,024x768	1,024x768	1,024x768	1,024x768
40GB (32.8GB)	40GB (33.1GB)	80GB (71GB)	40GB (37.2GB)	80GB (74.5GB)
CD-RW/DVD combo drive	CD-RW/DVD combo drive	DVD+/-RW DL	DVD+/-RW	DVD+/-RW DL
24X CD-R, 24X CD-RW, 8X DVD-ROM, 24X CD-ROM	24X CD-R, 24X CD-RW, 8X DVD-ROM, 24X CD-ROM	8X DVD+R, 8X DVD-R, 4X DVD+RW, 4X DVD-RW, 2.4X DVD+R DL, 24X CD-R, 16X CD-RW, 8X DVD-ROM, 24X CD-ROM	8X DVD+R, 8X DVD-R, 4X DVD+RW, 4X DVD-RW, 24X CD-R, 10X CD-RW, 8X DVD-ROM, 24X CD-ROM	8X DVD+R, 8X DVD-R, 4X DVD+RW, 4X DVD-RW, 2.4X DVD+R DL, 24X CD-R, 16X CD-RW, 8X DVD-ROM, 24X CD-ROM
£49 inc VAT	£35 inc VAT	£30 inc VAT	£30 inc VAT	£30 inc VAT
2	4	4	3	4
No	1	1	No	No
No	No	No	No	No
No	No	No	No	No
10/100 wired, 802.11b/g	10/100/1,000 wired, 802.11a/b/g	10/100/1,000 wired, 802.11a/b/g	10/100 wired, 802.11b/g	10/100 wired, 802.11b/g
2	1	1	1	None
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Parallel	No	No	No	Parallel
No	No	No	No	No
£39 inc VAT	Yes	Yes	£15 inc VAT	Yes
No	No	No	No	No
Windows XP Professional	Windows XP Home	Windows XP Home	Windows XP Home	Windows XP Home
Windows CD	Restore CD and partition	Windows CD, driver CD, restore partition	Restore CD	Restore CD and partition
Norton AntiVirus 2004, PC-Doctor diagnostic tool	Microsoft Works 8	BullGuard Anti-virus 5.0 with 100MB online backup, Microsoft Works 8, Roxio Easy Media Creator 7 Basic VCD Edition, Sonic CinePlayer 6.7	Microsoft Office OneNote 2003, Microsoft Works 8.0, InterVideo WinDVD Creator 2 Platinum, Norton Internet Security 2004 90-day trial	Ability Office 2004, Panda Titanium Antivirus 2004, CyberLink PowerDVD 6, Roxio Easy Media Creator Basic DVD Home 7
None	Internal backup battery, memory card reader (supports MMC/SD/MS), integrated webcam	Internal backup battery, memory card reader (supports MMC/SD/MS), integrated webcam	None	None
Extra battery £101 inc VAT, external USB2 DVD writer £354 inc VAT	Extra battery £116 inc VAT	Extra battery £99 inc VAT	Extra battery £69 inc VAT	None
1984 (as Legend)	1987	2004	1985	1972
19,000	187	50	100	130
Not disclosed	24	10	50	20
Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm	Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm	Mon-Fri 9am-5pm, Sat 10am-2pm	Mon-Fri 8am-6pm	Mon-Fri 9am-5pm, Sat 9am-1pm
One year RTB	One year collect and return	One year collect and return	One year collect and return	One year RTB
One year RTB	One year collect and return	First year collect and return, second and third years RTB	One year collect and return	Three years RTB
£576	£586	£528	£542	£540
£490	£460	£449	£451	£425
www.lenovo.com	www.meshcomputers.com	www.go-mv.com	www.toshiba.co.uk	www.savastore.com
Misco	Mesh Computers	MV	Gultronics	Savastore
08000 388880	08700 464747	08718 554668	020 8991 9001	08716 661616
www.misco.co.uk	www.meshcomputers.com	www.go-mv.com	www.gultronics.co.uk	www.savastore.com
UR056UK	N/A	N/A	PSL10E-00F004EN	N/A